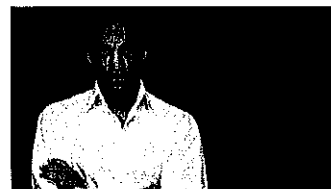


# T.J. Holmes: 'Yes, I use the n-word'

## Opinion

by T.J. Holmes | [July 9, 2012 at 6:00 AM](#)



At times, a white person might have more of a justification for using the n-word than I do. OK, let me be more specific: I believe *two* white people in particular had more of a justification than I do.

Earlier this year, two different CNN reporters said the n-word on live TV while reporting stories about hate crimes... Debates about how journalists report stories with offensive language are nothing new. Some say it's OK when it's in context and even necessary to report the story. Others say journalists should use restraint and be able to get the point across without explicitly using such offensive words. For the sake of this conversation, let's give the two CNN reporters the benefit of the doubt... Let's assume they were doing honest reporting and had the best of intentions to put the stories in graphic context. That's reasonable. And, that's their justification for using the n-word.

So, what's mine? I'm black, so I can? That's pretty weak.

Honestly, anytime I hear the n-word come out of any white person's mouth, I cringe. Whether I hear it from a white character in a movie or a white reporter telling a story, it makes me uneasy. I can't help it. But, if asked to explain why they used the n-word in their reporting, the two CNNers could make their case, agree with it or not. Ask me to explain why I used the n-word 20 times in a conversation with my best friend at dinner last night, I don't have much of a case to make.

In fact, I don't have any case to make. Yes folks, I too use the n-word, and I assure you I'm not using it in order to put anything in context. I use it casually and sometimes constantly. I have no real logic behind using the word, but for whatever reason, I'm given somewhat of a pass by society because I'm black.

Clearly, the black community has come to a different conclusion about the n-word. Fields argues that in "reclaiming" the n-word (and all its variations) we have popularized, globalized, and normalized its usage, which can be confusing to those — especially a younger generation — outside of our community.

And, given the out-sized impact black culture has on popular culture, the n-word might not seem so bad or so foreign to non-blacks who hear us use the word with such regularity and with such nonchalance.

Still, even if a younger generation of non-blacks doesn't fully understand the history of the n-word, everyone understands a general rule: we (blacks) can say it, and you (everybody else) can't. Beyond that, I really can't give you a good reason why I use it. I like saying it? It's the most accurate way of describing certain people? It's how I want to express my deep affection for my male friends? None of those reasons really fly.

One thing I've never done is use the n-word in a public setting. I've never said it outside of a circle of my close friends and family. And, I wouldn't dare. I've never said it in a news report, in a business meeting, at a social gathering, or in front of a crowd of people, even if that crowd was made up exclusively of blacks. That suggests I clearly recognize how vile the word is and that it shouldn't be used at all, by anyone...

So, for all intents and purposes, this will be my last "ni\*\*a."

## **The Pledge: Never use the n-word again**

*Sep. 25*

clarionledger.com

Myrlie Evers-Williams knows the pain of the n-word.

She heard it hurled many times in hate at her husband, Medgar Evers, before a Klansman shot him in the back on June 12, 1963. She and her three children ran outside to see him gasping and covered in blood before he died.

Her husband's killer, Byron De La Beckwith, walked free in 1964. Thirty years later, Beckwith went on trial again. Several witnesses testified that Beckwith bragged to them later about killing "that n-----," Medgar Evers.

This time, a jury convicted Beckwith, and he was sentenced to life in prison, where he died in 2001.

Some white Americans use the racial epithet, but it's African Americans' use of the word that bothers Evers-Williams more.

"They don't realize the historical shame of that word," she said. "It is not some term to toss to a buddy of yours."

Some young African-American men have told her they use the n-word among themselves, said the 77-year-old chairman emeritus of the national NAACP. "They say, 'Well, I call my brother that. It's a loving term.'

"That's no loving term — not unless you are ready to fight. For those of our generation, it is the most unpalatable word you can say."

Even though the word has been popularized in some songs, African Americans should never speak the word, she said. "That bothers me more than a Caucasian using it. It is racist. It is hateful. It is everything it was meant to be."

She challenged all Americans to stop using the n-word.